

*Letter Urges Secretary Shinseki to Return Roseburg Facility to a Full-service Medical Center*

**Washington, D.C.** - Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Representative Peter De Fazio (OR-4) sent a letter to Secretary of the Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki Wednesday requesting that he visit the Roseburg Oregon Veterans Medical Center before the VA makes any decisions to cut medical services there.

"In order to help you make a more informed decision, we invite you to visit the Roseburg hospital before deciding on VARHS's fate," wrote the Members. "We believe seeing the facility and talking to local veterans will give you a more accurate understanding of the situation facing our rural veterans and allow Oregon stakeholders to showcase the value of this beautiful site and the deep need we have for a full- service veterans' health care facility in Roseburg to serve veterans in all of southern Oregon."

In previous letters to Secretary Shinseki, Senators Merkley and Wyden, and Congressman DeFazio have expressed their concerns about the failures of an independent review to comprehensively assess the current and historical levels of care at Roseburg and the lack of consultation with local veterans who depend on the medical services available there.

The full text of the letter is available below.

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April 13, 2011

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki

Secretary of Veterans Affairs

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.

Washington D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki,

During the past nine months, we have been gravely concerned about the future of rural Oregon's Roseburg Veterans ' Hospital. Specifically, we want the site returned to a full-service medical center rather than continue the downward decline through attrition of services it was experiencing prior to our intervention. The ICU must be returned so veterans receive the best health care possible.

An independent study, contracted to Booz Allen Hamilton (BAH) has been completed and sent to your office via VISN-20. In a previous letter, we expressed reservations about the process BAH used and the universe of options outlined at a town hall meeting in Roseburg in December where veterans and other interested stakeholders received a presentation. Our opinion of the report remains unchanged.

In order to help you make a more informed decision, we invite you to visit the Roseburg hospital before deciding on VARHS's fate. We believe seeing the facility and talking to local veterans will give you a more accurate understanding of the situation facing our rural veterans and allow Oregon stakeholders to showcase the value of this beautiful site and the deep need we have for a full- service veterans' health care facility in Roseburg to serve veterans in all of southern Oregon.

We would like to arrange a date that works for all of us and will make ourselves available as best we can to accommodate your schedule.

Will White, from Senator Merkley's office, will call within a week to discuss scheduling options.

We look forward to your visit.

Sincerely,

Jeff Merkley  
United States Senator

Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

Peter DeFazio  
United States Congressman